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S E C R E T KATHMANDU 002364

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [NP](#) [UK](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: HEAD OF BRITISH AID IN KATHMANDU TALKS
WITH MAOIST LEADER

REF: A. KATHMANDU 2340
[B](#). KATHMANDU 2254
[C](#). KATHMANDU 2048
[D](#). STATE 321142 (NOTAL)

Classified By: AMB. MICHAEL E. MALINOWSKI. REASON: 1.5 (B,D).

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Summary: On December 3 Pol/Mil Chief received from his British counterpart notes from a November 13 telephone conversation between David Wood, the head of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) in Nepal, and Baburam Bhattarai, top ideologue and erstwhile lead negotiator for the Maoists. Bhattarai reportedly asked for advice on how to influence the U.S., which he described as "hostile" to the Maoists. Wood recommended that the Maoists end their anti-U.S. rhetoric and return to the negotiating table. The British Mission's willingness to share this information with us (albeit somewhat after the fact) is an encouraging sign of efforts to improve information sharing and transparency. End summary.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) On December 3 Pol/Mil Chief received from his British counterpart notes from a November 13 telephone conversation between David Wood, the head of the Department for International Development (DFID) in Nepal, and Baburam Bhattarai, top ideologue and erstwhile lead negotiator for the Maoists. According to Wood's notes, Bhattarai's call was "completely unexpected." When asked by Bhattarai for his assessment of the situation, Wood reportedly expressed dismay at the Maoists' decision to break the ceasefire, relayed his concern at the escalating casualties, and emphasized that since a military solution to the conflict is impracticable, negotiations must be resumed at some point.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) Asked by Bhattarai how to achieve a political solution to the conflict, Wood reportedly reminded him that political questions of that nature are more appropriately addressed to others, rather than to the head of a development agency. Bhattarai then contrasted DFID's position with that of the U.S., claiming that "DFID had a clear position on peace," while the U.S. is "hostile" to the Maoists. He asked Wood's advice on how to influence the U.S. According to Wood's notes, he replied, "by ending their anti-US rhetoric, and restoring the ceasefire and negotiations."

[1](#)4. (S/NF) Bhattarai then attempted to reassure Wood that the Maoists are "not against development and would do nothing to disturb it." That said, he acknowledged that the Politburo directive ordering Maoist cadres not to attack development projects (Ref C) "was taking time to implement." Wood reportedly concluded the conversation by observing that undermining development hurts all Nepalis, which, he suggested, is not in the Maoists' "long-term political interest." According to the SIS Chief at the British Embassy, Wood and Bhattarai have not spoken subsequently.

[1](#)5. (S/NF) Recently Major General Rookmangud Katawal, Nepal's National Security Advisor, told the Ambassador that the Maoist leadership twice had contacted DFID's Wood to ask for details of DFID's ongoing and future programs and plans in Nepal. On both occasions Wood refused to comply with the Maoist request. Katawal did not provide the source of his information.

[1](#)6. (S/NF) Comment: This is the first acknowledgement by our British colleagues that the head of the UK's development mission here in Kathmandu, as well as the British SIS chief, has been in contact with a Maoist leader. (We suspect this is not the only time that Wood has conversed with Bhattarai.) The implications of this conversation for U.S. security are attenuated by the fact that it predated the November 17 Maoist threat to our Peace Corps trainees in Rupandehi District (Ref B), and the Department's subsequent instructions to demarche the UK Government to pass a message to its covert Maoist contacts to stop threatening our interests (Ref D). The UK Embassy has since confirmed that its SIS Chief has passed such a message. Nonetheless, the UK Mission's willingness to share this information with us--even

if three weeks after the fact--is a hopeful sign of its efforts to improve communication and transparency with us.

MALINOWSKI